

Tom Horne
Superintendent

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ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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HORNE PROPOSES TO CUT TESTING TIME IN HALF, ALLOW MORE TIME FOR INSTRUCTION

PHOENIX (Thursday, October 23, 2003) – Arizona Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne today announced that he would be proposing to the State Board that the time taken to administer standardized tests be cut in half, to allow more time for instruction.

Horne described the proposal as follows:

“Currently, all Arizona public school students are given two standardized tests, the AIMS test and the SAT 9 test. The AIMS test measures the standards that were developed by Arizona teachers and that educators throughout the state are teaching. On the AIMS test we know that the students have been taught the material on which they are being tested.

“The SAT 9 by contrast is a test based on standards taught nationwide. Here, we do not know for sure that the students have been taught everything that is on the test, but the value of the test is to measure the performance of Arizona students against students throughout the country.

“Both tests perform an important function, but giving two tests puts a huge burden on teachers, students, and parents, and takes valuable time away from teaching new information and skills to the students.

“Our proposal would be to combine the tests into one test, which we are tentatively calling a norm reference embedded AIMS test. Some test questions are consistent with Arizona standards, and are nationally normed, and can serve both purposes. The test would therefore be far more efficient than current practice. There would be separate reports as though two separate tests were given. But the students would answer approximately one-half as many questions as they answer now.”

The proposal will be presented to State Board for discussion on October 27, and for action on November 17. If the State Board approves, the new proposal would take effect in the 2004-2005 school year.

“The object of my administration is to greatly increase the amount that students learn, and that they be able to demonstrate this with higher test scores. By providing a more efficient test, that reduces testing time, and increases learning time, we enable the teachers to teach more materials to the students. When combined with student accountability, school accountability, and an intensive school improvement process, we expect to be able to help students learn sufficiently more, and demonstrate this with higher test scores,” Horne added.

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EDITORS / ASSIGNMENT EDITORS: Supt. Horne will be available to the media to discuss this news at 2 PM today at the Arizona Department of Education main building at 1535 W. Jefferson, 4th floor in Phoenix.